

QUIT@WORK

Improving Employee Health

Easy Ways for Your Employees to Quit Smoking

Smoking Affects People and Businesses

While the adult smoking rate has gone down over the last 5 years, nearly 20% of Vermont adults still smoke. And for certain groups – like young adults and lower-income Vermonters – those figures are even higher. Smoking puts people at risk for many diseases, can worsen chronic conditions like asthma and heart disease, and exposes nonsmokers to secondhand smoke. The result is that nearly 800 Vermonters die each year from tobacco-related diseases, which also affect the quality of their lives, as well as their families and friends.

Smoking also impacts Vermont's businesses through increased costs. Based on national figures, the following estimates show some of the costs of employee tobacco use:

- **Healthcare Costs** – smokers' healthcare costs are higher than those of nonsmokers: \$2,284 per year, per smoker¹
- **Smoking breaks** – lost work time, compared to nonsmokers work time: \$2,574 per year, per smoker²
- **Absenteeism** – smokers are absent more than nonsmokers and ex-smokers: \$466 per year, per smoker³

There are other costs associated with smoking, such as secondhand smoke exposure and workers' compensation, but based only on the three issues above, the cost of employee tobacco use is approximately \$5,324 per year, per smoker.

What Does This Mean to Your Business? Do the Math...

Total employees _____ x 20% (VT adult smoking rate) = _____ smoking employees (approx.)

Smoking employees _____ x \$5,324 = _____ the total cost per year to business

What Does This Mean to Your Employees?

A pack-a-day smoker spends about \$5 per day on cigarettes. That adds up to \$150 per month and over \$1,800 per year. For an employee making \$30,000 per year, quitting smoking is like getting a 6% pay increase.

Vermont's Smoking Laws

In 1987, Vermont passed the Smoking in the Workplace law, which requires all employers to set a smoking policy that either prohibits smoking in the workplace or restricts it to designated areas. The Vermont law also requires that all businesses establish and communicate their smoking policy to employees. In addition, Vermont passed the Clean Indoor Air Act in 1993, which required all enclosed indoor public places to be smoke-free, including restaurants. In 2005, the law was amended to include bars and clubs.

Employer Involvement is Critical...and Easy

Employers play an important role in the lives of their employees. And while each employer-employee relationship is different, employers have an opportunity to provide information to their employees – information that can benefit both employer and employee.

This package was created to help employers share information about the range of quit smoking services and resources that are available to all Vermonters – most of which are free of charge.

Vermont's Quit Smoking Services

Vermont offers phone, local and online support for smokers looking to quit or get more information.

Coaching and Support Options

- Free Phone Coaching – 1-877-YES-QUIT (937-7848)
- Local Quit Coaching – Ready, Set...STOP program at your local hospital
- Online Quit Smoking Service – www.VermontQuitNet.com

See the *Vermont's Quit Smoking Services* flyer in this package (and on the CD-ROM) for more details about each of these programs.

Nicotine Replacement Therapy Can Double the Chances of Success

In addition to coaching and support, there are several free or reduced-cost nicotine replacement options (like patches, gum or lozenges) available to Vermonters who get quit coaching through the Quit Line or **Ready, Set...STOP** program. And all uninsured Vermonters, or those covered by VHAP (Vermont Health Access Plan), Medicare or the Ladies First Wellness program, get nicotine replacement free of charge. For more information on what your insurance provider offers, please contact your benefits manager.

For More Information

If you would like more information about the Tobacco Control Program or Vermont's quit smoking services, please contact us at 1-800-464-4343 or tobaccovt@vdh.state.vt.us. And for additional resources, including research and case studies about local businesses, go to <http://healthvermont.gov/preventtobacco>.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. MMWR, 51 (14): 300-303, April 2002. Annual Smoking – Attributable Mortality, Years of Potential Life Lost, and Economic Costs – United States, 1995-1999. Cost reflects 5% adjustment for inflation.

² EPIC/MRI Survey. Unpublished Report, April 2000. Smoking Breaks Costly to Business.

³ Tsai SP, Wendt JK, Cardarelli KM, Fraser AE. OEM, 60: 627-633, 2003. A Mortality and Morbidity Study of Refinery and Petrochemical Employees in Louisiana.



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What Can You Do for Your Employees?

There are several simple and easy steps you can take to help employees who smoke and are ready to quit, or who would like more information. The following is a brief overview of these steps, including tools that are available to your business.

- 1 Set a Workplace Smoking Policy**
- 2 Distribute Quit Smoking Information**
- 3 Be Ready When Employees Are Ready to Quit**

1 Set a Workplace Smoking Policy

Vermont law requires all businesses to establish a smoking policy. If you already have a policy, then move on to the next step.

If you would like to update your policy or need to set one, a sample model smoking policy has been provided in this package ("Model Smoke-Free Policy"), along with the *Vermont Smoking Law* fact sheet and other materials to help guide your development.

2 Distribute Quit Smoking Information to Employees

The Vermont Department of Health provides a range of materials about the services and resources available to help Vermont smokers quit.

Printed Samples and Other Materials

The following samples are included in this kit and are available in digital format on the CD-ROM:

- *Vermont's Quit Smoking Services* fact sheet – flyer or paycheck stuffer size
- Sample text for company memo, letter, e-mail, newsletter and intranet ("Employee Communications Templates")

Ideas for Distributing Information

- Post information in cafeterias, break areas, bathrooms, etc.
- Post information and links on company intranet
- Include information in company newsletter
- Distribute a memo or send an e-mail to each employee
- Send a personalized letter to each employee's home
- Include information with paychecks

- Hold a company meeting to share information and discuss issues and ideas, or make it part of an existing meeting
- Contact your local hospital's **Ready, Set...STOP** program to present information to managers and/or employees
- Provide quit smoking information and policy to new employees during their orientation

More Ideas – Incentives and Contests

In addition to distributing information, some companies offer their employees a little extra motivation and support to quit by using incentives such as the following:

- Hold a quit smoking class at your work site (contact your local **Ready, Set...STOP** program to set up the class)
- Allow employees to attend local classes during their work hours, without losing pay
- Allow smokers to use the Vermont Quit Line and VermontQuitNet.com during their work hours
- Hold a quit contest with a day or days off for those who quit successfully
- Hold a contest to see who can save the most money by not smoking, with a prize for the winner
- Link a quitting contest with the United Way or other charity, and encourage employees to donate all or some of the money saved by quitting; consider an employee match

3 Be Ready When Employees Are Ready to Quit

Once you have provided employees with information about the services available to them to quit smoking, it is important to continue to make that information available. Smokers may not be ready right away, but may decide to quit 2 days from now or 2 months from now.

Vermont's smokers are trying to quit – nearly half of them have made at least one serious quit attempt in the last year¹ – but it takes 5 to 7 quit attempts before most smokers quit for good. So having information on-hand and easily available year-round can be the key to trying to quit. And nonsmokers may also have friends and family members who would like information.

The following list includes several simple ideas to keep the message alive:

- Schedule a regular time to repost information, like every 3 to 6 months
- Provide quit smoking information (and other health information) during yearly employee reviews
- If employees receive healthcare benefits, provide quit smoking information with insurance premium and benefit updates
- Make sure all new employees get information about quit smoking services

¹ Vermont 2005 Adult Tobacco Survey.



Employee Communications Templates

Sample text for creating your own company e-mail, memo, letter, newsletter article and intranet section.
A Word version of this text is available on the CD-ROM in this kit.

E-mail/Memo/Letter

Dear employee,

This short [e-mail/memo/letter] is about tobacco use in our state and our company. You may not be a smoker, but you may know someone who is. About 20% of adults in Vermont smoke, which results in the deaths of nearly 800 Vermonters each year. It may surprise you to learn that nearly half the smokers in Vermont tried to quit at least once in the last year. *But like so many other things, quitting takes practice – most smokers find that it takes 5 to 7 tries to quit for good.*

An outline of the free quit smoking services for Vermonters is attached. If you don't smoke, please pass this on to someone who does.

If you have any questions about this [e-mail/memo/letter] or the services available to you, please contact me at [insert contact information].

Sincerely,
[insert name]

Newsletter

Vermont Offers a Range of Options for Smokers Who Want to Quit

Almost 20% of Vermont adults smoke, which means that even if you don't smoke, you probably know someone who does. It may surprise you to learn that about half of Vermont's smokers have tried to quit at least once over the past year. *But like so many other things, quitting takes practice – most smokers find that it takes 5 to 7 tries to quit for good.*

If you've tried it on your own and want a little help from a coach, would like to get self-help information or want to log on to an online network of Vermonters like you, check out the following options:

Free Phone Coaching with the Vermont Quit Line – Call toll free 1-877-YES-QUIT (937-7848) to get ready to quit.

Local Quit Coaching with Ready, Set...STOP – Call your local hospital or go to www.TobaccoStories.org to find your local program.

Free Online Quit Smoking Service – Sign up for e-mail reminders and tips, and talk to others about their quitting experiences at www.VermontQuitNet.com.

For more information or to share your stories, tips and advice, go to www.TobaccoStories.org.
Brought to you by the Vermont Department of Health – <http://healthvermont.gov>

Intranet

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The Vermont Department of Health offers a range of services to help Vermonters double their chances of quitting smoking. If you would like to get ready to quit, find out more about the services or get info for a friend, here are some options:

Free Phone Coaching with the Vermont Quit Line

The Quit Line links you with a quit coach who will help you get ready to quit with tips and advice, and will provide support to help you stay quit. The Quit Line can also refer you to a local quit coach or mail out self-help materials.

The Vermont Quit Line can also help you get free or lower-cost nicotine replacement therapy like patches, gum or lozenges. Call toll free 1-877-YES-QUIT (937-7848) when you want to get ready to quit. For more information about the Quit Line or to sign up to have a coach call you, [click here](http://www.tobaccostories.org/subpage.cfm?pageID=11) (link to <http://www.tobaccostories.org/subpage.cfm?pageID=11>).

Local Quit Coaching with Ready, Set...STOP

Each Vermont hospital has a **Ready, Set...STOP** program that offers one-on-one or group coaching to quit smoking. Your quit coach can also help you get free or lower-cost nicotine replacement therapy.

When you are ready, call the **Ready, Set...STOP** program at your local hospital. Or you can call the Vermont Quit Line or [click here](http://www.tobaccostories.org/subpage.cfm?pageID=12) (link to <http://www.tobaccostories.org/subpage.cfm?pageID=12>) to find out how to reach a local quit coach.

Free Online Quit Smoking Service with www.VermontQuitNet.com

QuitNet.com is the leading online quit smoking resource. More than 60,000 smokers and ex-smokers visit the site every month to quit smoking or to stay quit.

QuitNet gives you advice, tips and other help to succeed. They figure out what type of smoker you are and send e-mails that fit you. The Vermont Department of Health provides free QuitNet access for all Vermonters, a savings of \$100. To find out more or to join QuitNet, go to www.VermontQuitNet.com.

For more information or to share your stories, tips and advice, go to www.TobaccoStories.org.

Brought to you by the Vermont Department of Health – <http://healthvermont.gov>

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Setting Your Workplace Smoking Policy

Ideas for Implementing Policy

- Many businesses find it helpful to involve employees in the process of creating policy, so you may want to ask several employees to create a team to jointly develop and communicate your smoking policy.
- Smokers will be affected the most, so try to get them involved with shaping and communicating the policy. Some businesses have even found "champions" among their smokers.
- Give the process time – employees need time to adjust to change, especially one that may affect their daily routine. You may need 3 to 6 months, or even more, to change your policy.

Reasons for a 100% Smoke-free Work Site

- Vermont businesses have the choice to be 100% smoke-free or to include designated smoking areas (see the *Vermont Smoking Law* fact sheet for more information on the difference).
- When reviewing each option, you may want to consider the following information about 100% smoke-free work sites:
 - o This arrangement complies with all laws and ordinances
 - o Low cost to implement (no need for separate ventilation)
 - o Decreases maintenance costs
 - o Reduces employee exposure to secondhand smoke
 - o May reduce the number of cigarettes smoked by employees and encourage them to quit
 - o Sends a clear message to employees
 - o Research shows that creating a tobacco-free workplace is one of the most effective things you can do to help employees stop smoking¹

Setting Distance from Work Site Buildings

- Vermont law does not designate that smoking take place at a specific distance from public buildings and work sites, but you may choose to include this in your own smoking policy.
- Many state and private buildings in Vermont require smoking to be up to 50 feet from the building so that smoke does not reenter the building through entrances or ventilation systems, and so it doesn't affect visitors or nonsmoking employees.

For More Information

If you would like additional information about smoking policy or to order a printed copy of the *Work Site No-Smoking* poster, contact the Vermont Department of Health's Health Protection Division at 1-800-439-8550.

Model Smoke-Free Policy

It is the policy of [insert company name] to provide a smoke-free environment for all employees and visitors. This policy covers the smoking of any tobacco product and the use of smokeless or "spit" tobacco, and applies to both employees and non-employee visitors.

Definition

There will be no smoking of tobacco products within the facilities at any time.

If smoking occurs outside the building, it must be at least [insert distance] feet from the main entrance to ensure that the smoke does not enter the building. All materials used for smoking, including cigarette butts and matches, must be extinguished and disposed of in appropriate containers.

(For a smoke-free building and grounds) There will be no smoking of tobacco products within the facilities or on the grounds at any time.

There will be no smoking in any [insert company name] vehicles at any time.

There will also be no tobacco use in personal vehicles when transporting persons on [insert company name]-authorized business.

Procedure

- 1** Visitors will be informed of this policy through signs, and it will be explained by their host.
- 2** [Insert company name] will help employees who wish to quit smoking by providing information about Vermont's quit smoking services.
- 3** Any violations of this policy will be handled through the standard disciplinary procedure.
- 4** For questions about *Vermont's Smoking in the Workplace* law, or to file a complaint with the Department of Health, call 1-800-439-8550.

¹ National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA). HEDIS 2004. Health plan employer data & information set. Vol. 2, Technical specifications. Washington (DC): National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA); 2003. 374p.